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## **State test score results show need for “tough conversations within communities” to ensure success of students**

*Disappointing results “can’t be ignored”, states EOC Chair*

*Editor’s Note: The results of SC PASS, SC READY, and the End-of-Course examinations – by state, school, and district – are available on the [SC Department of Education website](#). The embargo was lifted at 9 a.m. on Monday, October 2.*

**Columbia** – Today, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) released state, district, and school level data for three end-of-year tests taken in school year 2016-17: 1) End-of-Course examinations in Algebra I, Biology I, English I, and U.S. History and the Constitution; 2) SC READY, English Language Arts and Math exams given to students in grades 3-8; and 3) SC PASS, summative assessments given to 4-8 graders in Science and Social Studies. The results, particularly on SC READY, where comparisons could be made from the previous year, show overall declines in English Language Arts scores statewide. In math, improvements were only seen in grades 6 and 7 among students statewide.

Calling the results disappointing, Chairman of the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) Neil C. Robinson, Jr., said “if we are truly committed as a state to seeing that every student succeeds and is college and career-ready, these results can’t be ignored. We have to have tough conversations within our communities on how we can turn things around for children.”

Robinson noted that although online testing was required to begin in all districts, approximately half of school districts received State Board of Education (SBE) waivers, releasing them from this requirement for SC READY and SC PASS. In districts that tested online, the EOC will analyze the results to see if any of the declines can be attributed to online testing.

In the spring of 2015, South Carolina educators authored the *South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics*. South Carolina colleges and universities reviewed the standards and agreed that if a student achieved these standards, then the student was prepared academically for college. The SBE and the EOC then approved these standards. The SCDE procured an assessment, SC READY, to measure if our students are achieving these rigorous standards.

“What is so disappointing about the results is that they show a consistent decline in student achievement across grade levels and content areas,” said Robinson. Historically, South Carolina experienced an increase in the percentage of students meeting state standards during the second-year administration of a new assessment. Instead, we saw a sharp decline in SC READY scores. Just as

disturbing is the continued growth in achievement gaps between black and white, disabled and non-disabled, and students in poverty (SIP) and non-SIP students.”

With the change in the grading scale, the rigor of the End-of-Course assessments increased and impacted these results. For end-of-course assessments, between 40 and 55 percent of students scored a *D* or *F* on the end-of-course assessments in Algebra 1 and English 1.

“It is important to recognize that the rigor of the Algebra 1 test has increased to better reflect the mathematical skills needed of college or career ready students,” stated Robinson. “Unfortunately, the results are consistent with what business has been telling us – finding employees for the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) careers and high-tech manufacturing jobs available in our state is a huge challenge.”

For parents who have concerns about their child’s results on end-of-year assessments, especially parents whose child’s scores are incomplete, Robinson recommends a plan of action that involves families and teachers. The individual student assessment results should be one of many indicators of a child’s academic performance. He suggests asking your child’s teacher for additional information such as your child’s reading levels, to identify strengths and weakness. Also, families and parents should refer to material available at [www.scfriendlystandards.org](http://www.scfriendlystandards.org) for family-friendly guides to understanding what is expected of your child academically by grade level and subject area. Resources are also available on this site to assist in reinforcing learning at home.

“Too often, our children are capable of more than we ask them to do,” Robinson stated. “The college- and career- standards are achievable by all students but students, schools, families and communities must work together to give our children the tools and support they need.”

## **SC READY**

SC READY was given to students across South Carolina in grades 3-8 in English Language Arts for the first time in school year 2015-16. The test is intended to provide an end-of-the year “snapshot” of overall student performance. SC READY is designed to measure whether students are learning the college-and-career ready standards in core content areas.

Tables below show the percentage of students scoring *Meets Expectations* or *Exceeds Expectations* on SC READY in both English Language Arts and Mathematics in 2016-17 and compares the statewide performance from 2016-17 to 2015-16 (% Change). According to SCDE officials, the score for *Meets Expectations* on the eighth grade SC READY test is directly tied to a college-ready score on The ACT, a college-readiness exam. Items in **red** denote negative growth from last year’s statewide results on SC READY; results in **green** show improvement. A student score of *Meets Expectations* means the student has met grade-level content standards; a score of *Exceeds* means a student has exceeded grade level expectations. Students scoring *Does Not Meet* are not meeting expectations defined in the grade-level content standards. There is a fourth level of student performance, *Approaches Expectations*, which is defined as approaching grade-level expectations.

**SC READY Scores, School Year 2016-17**  
**English Language Arts**

Grade	% of Students Scoring <i>Meets or Exceeds</i>	% Change	% <i>Does Not Meet</i>	% Change
3	42.1	1.6▼	26.1	3.9▼
4	40.9	2.5▼	29.5	5.3▼
5	38.3	2.9▼	28.0	4.1▼
6	39.7	1.3▼	23.7	3.3▼
7	36.4	4.3▼	28.4	5.2▼
8	40.1	4.6▼	28.0	5.6▼

**SC READY Scores, School Year 2016-17**  
**Mathematics**

Grade	% of Students Scoring <i>Meets or Exceeds</i>	% Change	% <i>Does Not Meet</i>	% Change
3	52.5	1.1▼	22.2	0.7▼
4	46.4	0.3▼	24.1	1.4▼
5	40.0	4.3▼	27.9	5.0▼
6	41.5	2.0▲	25.6	0.2▲
7	33.3	1.4▼	31.0	4.4▼
8	34.5	2.1▲	31.5	2.2▼

**SC PASS**

Like SC READY, SC PASS is intended to provide an end-of-the year “snapshot” of overall student performance. It was given last school year to students in grades 4-8 in Science and Social Studies. In 2016-17 the achievement levels on SCPASS Science were changed to reflect the same student achievement levels on SC READY; therefore, changes from prior school year cannot be fairly made. Social Studies scores reflect the scoring used in years’ past; students scoring *Met* or *Exemplary* are meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations respectively.

**SC PASS Scores, School Year 2016-17**  
**Social Studies**

Grade	% Met or Exemplary	% Change	%Not Met	% Change
4	80.8	0.5▼	19.2	0.5▼
5	70.9	0.6▼	29.1	0.6▼
6	73.3	3.0▼	26.7	3.0▼
7	63.5	4.9▼	36.5	4.9▼
8	67.7	1.8▼	32.3	1.8▼

## SC PASS Scores, School Year 2016-17

### Science

Grade	% Meets or Exceeds	% Does Not Meet
4	48.4%	23.8
5	46.1%	28.3
6	48.0%	29.0
7	46.5%	29.1
8	49.5%	25.7

### End-of-Course assessments

End-of-Course assessments are given to students as they complete the four courses: Algebra I, Biology I, English I, and U.S. History and the Constitution. The score also counts 20 percent of the student's overall grade in the course. Changes made to the grading scale also make fair comparisons from year-to-year impossible.

### End-of-Course Test Scores, School Year 2016-17

	A	B	C	D	F
Algebra 1	9.3	13.3	22.0	30.1	25.3
Biology	32.2	13.0	14.2	14.3	26.3
English 1	11.4	21.1	23.7	20.6	23.2
US History and the Constitution	14.4	14.9	18.6	19.9	32.2

*The SC Education Oversight Committee is an independent, non-partisan group made up of 18 educators, business persons, and elected leaders. Created in 1998, the committee is dedicated to reporting facts, measuring change, and promoting progress within South Carolina's education system.*